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ABSTRACT

This manual was developed to provide businesses with practical and easily implemented ways to meet the needs of local schools. It provides ideas and approaches for developing partnerships focused on school dropouts by exploring problems and pitfalls and offering solutions. The document has five chapters; a 21-item reference list; a description of the National Dropout Prevention Center's collection of databases, FOCUS; a 13-item listing of additional resources, and sample materials for partnership programs. Chapter 1 discusses recognizing the problem of dropouts. Chapter 2 addresses ways of dealing with the problem and why school efforts are not enough. Chapter 3 describes structuring a community partnership program and includes a planning guide for partnership activities. Chapter 4 provides examples of working partnerships. Chapter 5 discusses how to keep the momentum of a program going through monitoring, public relations and recognition, and evaluation and feedback. (CML)

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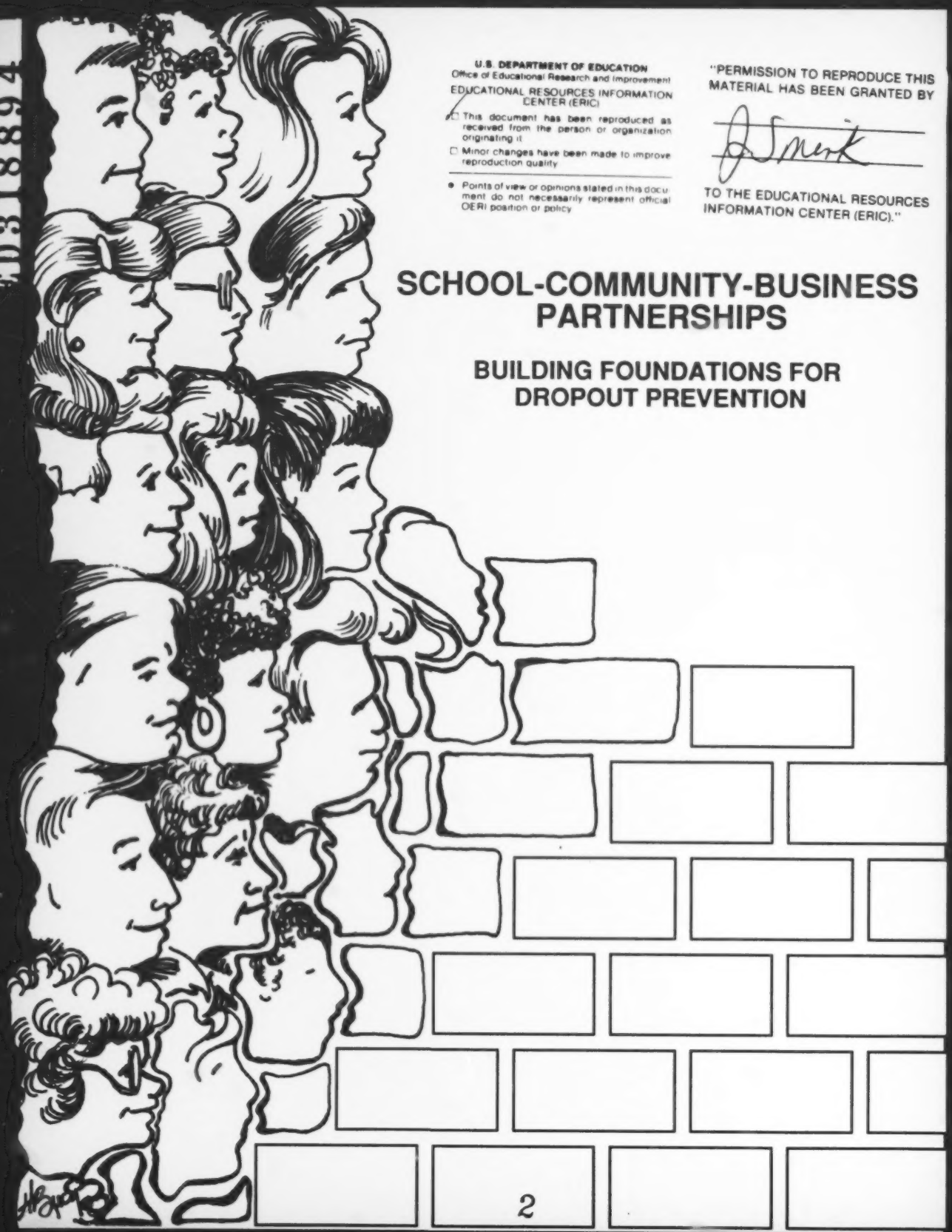

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SCHOOL-COMMUNITY-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

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BUILDING FOUNDATIONS FOR DROPOUT PREVENTION

Harriet Hanauer Bucy
April 1990

School-Community-Business Partnerships: Building Foundations for Dropout Prevention is the result of a joint effort by The National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University and Rock Hill School District Three in Rock Hill, South Carolina, to develop a strategic planning model for implementing public-private partnerships in local communities.

Funding for this publication was provided through a one-time grant to the school district from the Center. The document was authored by Harriet Bucy of Rock Hill School District. Dr. Jay Smink, Linda Shirley, and Lib Crockett of the Center assisted in research, design, and editing. It is the sincere hope of all the individuals involved that this document will help establish the needed link between schools, communities, and businesses.

The National Dropout Prevention Center maintains an extensive Resource Materials Library which contains reports and other materials related to public-private partnerships. An invitation is extended to business, community, and school leaders to utilize these resources.

The National Dropout Prevention Center is a partnership between an organization of concerned leaders--representing business, educational and policy interests--and Clemson University, created to reduce significantly America's dropout rate by fostering public-private partnerships in local school districts and communities throughout the nation. The Center cultivates these partnerships by collecting, analyzing and disseminating information about technical assistance to develop and demonstrate dropout prevention programs.

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Preface

American businesses have much at stake in the quality of education young people receive. The future workforce springs from the ranks of those who graduate from high school and those who do not.

By the year 2000, seven out of ten jobs will require 13 or more years of education. As one out of every four students fails to graduate, the number of qualified workers to fill these positions dwindles. Companies are already paying millions of dollars for retraining and remediation, and these costs will continue to spiral unless innovative efforts are initiated by business and education leaders.

One effort undertaken by corporate America is the formation of public-private partnerships between schools and the businesses operating in their communities. Current estimates project that at least 140,000 such partnerships exist. Some are only on paper, too narrowly focused, or reflect only financial contributions to schools by the business partners. Total involvement by business leaders is critical to the success of public-private partnerships.

School-Community-Business Partnerships: Building Foundations for Dropout Prevention was developed to provide businesses with practical and easily implemented ways to meet the needs of local schools. This manual provides creative ideas and approaches for developing viable and vital partnerships focused on school dropouts by exploring problems and pitfalls and offering solutions.

My thanks to Harriet Bucy of Rock Hill School District Three for helping us get on paper what has been so successful in her community, as well as many others across the nation.

Very special thanks are due to Esther Ferguson. As founder of the National Dropout Prevention Center, she demonstrated her commitment to education by seeking out the interest and support of corporate America to create an atmosphere to underscore the value of public-private partnerships.

Schools belong to community and business leaders, as well as parents, students and educators. We are all "at-risk" if our children do not acquire adequate academic or occupational skills and mature attitudes and work ethics which make our nation strong and economically competitive. This manual will encourage involvement of communities and their members in the kind of successful partnerships that encourage young people to remain in school, therefore, placing us all at less risk.

Jay Smink, Executive Director
National Dropout Prevention Center

Recognizing the Problem

She had been his eighth grade history teacher. That was four years ago. His call was a complete surprise. Where had he been?

"I've been working the coal mines in West Virginia for the last three years. Now I'm back. Me and my wife and baby. We got a three-month-old boy. I'm happy as a Junebug."

"I lost track of you after eighth grade. How long did you stay in school, Donnie?"

"Ninth grade. I quit and got married. I just called the school to see where you was. I talked to my counselor, too."

"The last time I saw you was in the office of the elementary school. You came to pick up your little brother. Where is he now?"

"Oh, he's livin' with me an my wife. I'm gonna make sure he stays in school."

"Why did you drop out, Donnie?"

"I'll tell ya, if they'd 'a just let me smoke in the bathroom...."

Phone Conversation, 1989

Dropouts! This complex problem wrinkles the brow of every thinking, caring educator in America. Who is a dropout? Which gender, race, socio-economic background is this child? How can we identify a dropout? Why? Across the nation, workshops, seminars, meetings, and conferences address the subject of dropouts. Reporting systems seek to either expose or disguise the problem. How many are there? How serious is the problem? Can we reduce the dropout rate? When can we be satisfied that we have solved the problem? Do we need to get tough with students? Do we need to be more understanding? What is the definition of a dropout? Who are they? And ... why?

Studies have produced intricate charts, graphs, and tracking records for statistical analysis. The primary purpose of this writing is simply to impress upon the reader the scope of the problem, identify partnerships that will help, and tell how to get started.

In America today about 30 percent of our young people do not complete high school. They drop out taking with them little preparation to cope with the work force in a rapidly changing world. Nearly one-third of each ninth grade class will not complete high school. They progress from being at-risk students in the classroom to at-risk citizens in society. The dropout rate is everyone's problem.

Definition

Officially, students become dropouts when they become a statistic. When they are old enough to meet compulsory attendance law requirements, they leave, and officially become dropouts. Whether or not the books got turned in or the fifth period math teacher breathed a sigh of relief are not a part of this statistic. The students are no longer enrolled and did not complete a diploma or certificate program. Just gone. Dropped out. They got finished with us before we thought we were finished with them.

There is another kind of dropout. Unofficial dropouts do not show up in the lines of numbers. These students were there when school opened one year and were still

counted as enrolled when school closed in June. The next year opened with several numbers missing in enrollment. Did the students stay back a year? Did a child meet with an accident, become a parent, or just not show up? Present statistics do not answer all these questions. The missing students do not figure into the annual school dropout rate the way it has been counted. Neither official dropouts nor graduates of any program, the statistics simply no longer recognize the existence of these former students.

Another kind of unofficial dropout may stay in school willingly or grudgingly, just because there seems to be no other alternative. Physically, they are enrolled but mentally they have already dropped out. These students may eventually complete a diploma or certificate program; however, their potential abilities and talents are never really utilized. A "warm body" will be counted as a success; but along the way, the child may have dropped out of the band, scheduled consumer math in place of algebra, quit the cross-country team, and paid to take second-year Spanish over in summer school. There were probably a series of small behavior problems beginning in third grade and a brief stint of in-school suspension. Officially, this student, male or female, is not a statistic reading "dropped out." Unofficially this student dropped out over and over again.

Difficulties in collecting national data are compounded by inconsistencies in methods of counting. Obvious variations can be seen in the ways states define a dropout.

Definition of a Dropout From Various States

California

Any student in grade 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 who: (a) departed school prior to graduation or completion of formal education or legal equivalent; and (b) is not known to have returned to a school or other educational program by mid-October of the following school year, as evidenced by a transcript request or other reliable documentation.

Georgia

A dropout is a student who:

- was enrolled in a district at some time during the previous regular school year
- was not enrolled at the beginning of the current regular school year
- has not graduated or completed a program of studies by the maximum age established by the state (16)
- has not transferred to another public school district or to a state-approved educational program
- has not left school because of illness, death, or a school-approved absence

North Carolina

A dropout is a student at any grade (K-12) who leaves a school at any time during the twelve-month school year for any reason except death before graduation or completion of a program of study without transferring to another educational institution.

Pennsylvania

Dropouts are defined as pupils leaving the public schools before graduation without transferring to another school. Dropouts can only occur among pupils in grades 7-12 or ungraded or special education who are 15 through 21 years old.

South Carolina

A dropout is a pupil who leaves school for any reason except death, before graduation or completion of a program of studies and without transferring to another school.

Texas

A dropout is defined as any secondary school student who was expected to enroll in a district school following summer vacation but did not, or voluntarily withdrew from the district during the regular school year, and for whom there was no evidence of matriculation elsewhere.

Wisconsin

A dropout is any student above the age of 16 years who has been excused from the public schools by board action.

The Council of Chief State School Officers has made recommendations for more comparable and timely collection of data and identifies a dropout as "a student who (for any reason other than death) leaves school before graduation without transferring to another school/institution."

The way dropouts are defined and counted varies. There is one common denominator: Too many young people are becoming part of society without adequate preparation and skills for entry into the world of work.

Future

To absorb fully the dramatic importance of educating young people, it is necessary to understand a few demographics and how they affect the work force:

- The entry level labor pool population, 16 to 24-year-olds, is shrinking.
- The number of young people disconnecting from school is on the rise.
- Fewer than half of those who drop out of school become employed.
- Tax revenues are diminishing due to both declining labor pool and lack of a trained work force.
- Welfare and other social programs are increasing, resulting in a higher and higher cost to society.

(Education Commission of the States, 1985)

The effects of a poorly prepared and dwindling work force on the economy are multifaceted and profound:

- Business and industry spend more than 30 billion dollars annually on employee training. The employees of the eighties have become increasingly more expensive to train.
- Business also must pay a higher price for increases in supervision, remediation, errors, and defective products. Costs will include seeking alternative labor sources, automation, and moving factories out of the United States.
- Poorly motivated youth who lack fundamental skills will risk becoming disconnected from work and its benefits. The lifetime earnings lost will compound into staggering numbers of billions of dollars over their lifetimes.
- Loss of income dictates that lost tax revenues on that income will be tremendous. Proportionately, dollars to support welfare, crime prevention, and other social programs will need to increase. Results will mean a fewer number of people will "foot the bill" for a greater number.

(National Alliance of Business, 1987)

The costs to society in human terms are impossible to calculate. Growing youth problems include drug and alcohol abuse, teenage pregnancy, teenage homicide, suicide, and crime, as well as poverty and unemployment. These frightening indicators of increasing societal problems are also creating a permanent underclass of poor,

dependent people who have little chance for improving their own lives or the lives of their children.

Viewpoints

Educators

The educational catch phrase of the 80's had to include the word "excellence." In educational circles, everything was "coming up roses," at least on the surface. Testing proliferated and test scores communicated accountability. Schools were doing their job.

At the same time, a dark suspicion lurked in the minds of teachers and administrators. Something wasn't quite right. Kids skipped school, found acceptance in drugs and alcohol, and became parents before they became adults.

A few educators still remembered Sputnik and the race to the moon. Many were heavily influenced by the Carnegie Report and "why Johnny can't read."

A typical teacher worried about 100 percent of a class meeting minimum standards and probably resented the very existence of the four or five students who kept the class from having a perfect score.

Elementary teachers knew they received first grade students smiling and eager to begin school, but by fourth or fifth grade, something had happened. If it wasn't the math and science space race or a need for another method of teaching reading, then what was it? What was wrong?

A variety of opinions and viewpoints from educators reflect modern problems. One concern is the breaking apart of the typical "Ozzie and Harriet" American family. For the last 20 years, teachers and principals have bemoaned the lack of parental concern and involvement. They patiently waited in vain for the trend of single-parent homes and latchkey children to run its course.

Lack of family involvement leads directly to thoughts concerning television. Many teachers in the classrooms today do not remember life before T.V. (the babysitter of the baby boomers). Mesmerizing hours of entertainment, requiring no particular skills or logic, transformed what might have been the most dynamic communicator for learning in the history of mankind into an enemy of education. Business reports and ladies' magazines publish alarming results of surveys comparing hours spent in front of the T.V. to time spent reading, talking to parents, doing homework, or even physical activity. Other reports, perhaps even more frightening, attempt to document the several thousand times each year a sexual stimulation, violent action, or beer-for-the-good-life message bombards an impressionable young audience.

Technology and change boggle the minds of educators. Toffler's **Third Wave** (1984) and Naisbitt's **Megatrends** (1986) leave educators feeling like the proverbial snowball rolling downhill...out of control. More change has taken place in their lifetimes, more scientists alive in the world today, and more medical advancement since World War II than in all other recorded history combined. Keeping up with computer technology is a full-time job. Is it any wonder that educators wish they could retreat into the safety of methods and classrooms like those they remember from their childhoods, when we all lived the American dream? How, they wonder, can education be relevant to today's world when we can't seem to catch up?

In addition to the child whose test scores fall heavily near the bottom and the child

whose parents can't seem to get him to school half of the time, there is the boy who works until 2:00 a.m. and sleeps through history and English, the girl who is more interested in life in her pocketbook than locating the Gulf of Mexico, and the cross, surly bully who stares down anything in his path. These kids leave school, drop out, and there is an undeniable sigh of relief. Problems will go down and test scores will go up.

Using standardized test scores as the primary indicator that schools are doing their job is, at best, a questionable practice. The business world must work with educators to develop understandable alternatives for measurement of how well students are prepared for future work force needs.

Educators truly want to give students what they need to survive and contribute in today's world, the year 2000, and beyond. Appalled by the increase of substance abuse, children having children, and apathetic attitudes on the part of parents, the viewpoint of educators takes on a glassy-eyed numbness of wanting to cry out for help but not knowing where to turn.

"We have hundreds of people struggling to find the same answers. We need a system of sharing and communication."
Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers

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Communication between educators and the community clarifies needs and identifies resources. This is best accomplished through working partnerships. The interaction produces involvement of time, energy, and resources necessary to convey economic, as well as social, realities to students and to begin to address problems in a systematic way.

Community

An analysis of how a community views its schools and the dropout problem depends on where one stands and in whose shoes. Listening to what people say produces an idea of a few general trends.

One of the tendencies of the 1980's has been to compare schools and students on a more global scale. Americans seem to be generally convinced that Japanese and European children are more dedicated and receive better educations. Trying to figure out what the Japanese do better than we do has become something of a national pastime.

Another generality maintains that young people today are faced with unbelievable pressures, temptations, and decisions, reflecting the suspicion that society itself may need to shoulder some blame for the dropout problem.

Many individuals in a community do not have school-age children and do not get particularly involved. Some see the big picture of education as the future of all that we know and love. Others simply wonder "What's the matter with kids today?" while hoping they will just stay in their own yards.

For schools to offer the programs and technology necessary to meet the future head on, a support base on the street, in the work place, and especially in the voting place is essential.

If, in fact, the total community is concerned about its role in the education of students, it is necessary to listen to some of their comments and view the schools from

their vantage points. Involvement of community, especially business support, requires understanding in order to establish effective partnerships. A community effort must include business and industry, parents, civic organizations, and the students themselves working with educators. Involvement opportunities through an organized community partnership program offers the framework upon which to build this support.

Business

For business and industry, the bottom line must, of course, be one of economics. For them, the cost of training or retraining the product of the school system seems unnecessarily high when the employee cannot read directions or tell time on a clock with hands and a face. Some businesses are more concerned with the inability of new hires to think on their feet or communicate complete ideas. Other businesses are shocked to discover employees have no idea which ocean touches both the U.S. and Japan or how to locate the nation's capital. Lack of work force readiness seems to reflect the failure of schools to educate. From the business perspective, a lack of pride in work, inconsistant time on task, and poor attendance may mean the educational system has been remiss.

Business and industry, however, tend to continue to defend, support, and value education. The people who make up the world of work are themselves products of the system. Nevertheless, lingering doubts about the effectiveness and relevance of education are reinforced by the poor quality of many applicants. A lack of success in school carries over into the job.

Students may be out of the classroom and no longer pose a problem to the teacher, but these kids are somewhere and the problems have not disappeared. Many are not prepared to work. This results in an economic problem, either to educate and train or support these members of society who are unemployed. The business world is highly aware of dropouts and looking to education for the solution.

"We are willing to throw more money, not at the problem, but at well-conceived programs that meet our needs."
Walter Y. Elisha, CEO, Springs Industries

Partnerships which unite educators with business and industry provide the necessary system for communicating ideas. The financial benefits of a well-prepared work force motivates businesses to become involved. Incentives, mentoring, recognition, individualization of study through use of technology, rewards for acceptable behavior, as well as funds for updating equipment and facilities and grants for innovative ideas, are among the resulting benefits to schools.

Civic Organizations

Civic organizations are clubs and other nonprofit entities of the community. Museums, governmental agencies, colleges, churches, and professional groups fall under this general heading. Many civic organizations are highly concerned and benevolent toward education and the dropout rate. Often a component within the organization is designed to serve education. A wealth of time, energy, and materials are available through civic organizations to enrich classrooms. They generally embrace education as a value but may be uninformed or miss-informed concerning such issues as dropouts.

Although the motivation and acceptance of the challenge to assist youth may be inherent features of the organization, partnerships enable civic groups to find direction for their intentions. Two-way communication with a school or educational program results in more effective efforts. Well-informed members also serve to carry positive messages back into the community. This results in an upward spiral of greater support and involvement for students.

Parents

The viewpoint of parents concerning education and the dropout rate cannot be defined any more clearly than that of educators. All those elements of race, education, socio-economic level, and ethnic background tend to color their perspectives like a kaleidoscope.

Think for a moment about your own experience as a fifth grade student. Were you a successful student? What about those sitting around you? How many of them graduated with you? What about Rose? Where did George wind up? Were all of them successful students or just the few who made it to the honor roll board?

The simple fact is that Rose and George did not graduate. They did not have a successful school experience but they are out there in the world with children of their own. Those children have been moving through the education system.

The viewpoints of Rose and George and many others like them who were unhappy in school may continue to be attitudes of distrust and rejection. These attitudes are conveyed to their own children and reflected by a lack of involvement and insecurity as parents dealing with education. The view is "stay out of the office and let the school solve it."

However, the most successful students may also become parents who expect more of everything from schools for their children. Some families with high levels of education and income are families with latchkey children whose school work and behavior fall far below expectations.

The parental viewpoint, which has become common to all socio-economic groups, expects schools to shoulder responsibility for solving most of the problems of children. These include daycare, sex education, discipline, as well as the teaching of values, civic obligations, and work ethics.

In spite of the changing structure of home and family life, all studies indicate parent involvement is critically important to the development of students. Parents must be active partners in the education process. Schools must be aggressive in reaching out to involve them.

Students

It has been said that education is the only industry in which the consumer and the product are one and the same. In examining the total community, dropouts or any other issue affecting students, students tend to be overlooked as participants.

Each child is clearly an individual. Some truly come into the system brighter than, cleaner than, healthier than, and more lovable than others (depending on one's taste in kids). It does seem universally true that students all wish to be bright, clean, healthy, and loved. Some make it and some do not. Kids don't know that some of them will fail when they arrive for their first day. Somewhere along the way, usually quite early, they learn this.

It is a risk to try something new. Learning requires taking risks. Messages are soon sent to children which ones are bright and which ones are not. Children tend to become what we decide they are. Once this is established, and the child stops taking risks, the remaining years in school are spent developing coping skills to deal with failure. Coping skills are strongly tied to self-esteem. If acceptance did not come from school, the only other choice is among peers...acting out, bullying, smoking, drinking, sexual activity, retreating, or attacking. Whatever the guise, very early the children may be in danger of discarding education as a value. The risk they take is to drop out.

The goal is to include students as creators in their own education.

Students look at each other and know who will make it and who might not; who to stick with and who to stay clear of. They learn to carry their lunch rather than money and to use the bathroom at home. Kids know who is at risk for dropping out and wonder why the school can't get control of the situation. Some students believe troublesome at-risk types should be expelled and can't believe so much effort is spent trying to make them stay.

For students, the future is now and the solutions are those immediately available. The viewpoint will invariably be tied to self-concept as it relates to school experiences.

Students who simply know how to conform to the rules governing requirements, attendance, and behavior still may not have the necessary preparation to survive in a changing world. These students still become alienated to instruction.

The goal is to include students as creators in their own education. By choosing school as a value, students set their own expectations and become full partners in the educational process. Accomplishment of this ideal student attitude is ultimately the goal of all community partnerships.

There is no single nor simple solution. Schools must play a leadership role in effectively dealing with the problems of at-risk youth. Schools cannot, however, do it alone. A tremendous joint effort involving entire communities to keep kids in school and effectively link education with the needs of business and industry will require true collaboration.

Addressing the Problem...Making In-roads

Spring football practice was coming to a close. The coach gathered the team members for a serious meeting. The State Department of Education, he told them, was changing the requirements for athletic eligibility. Four credits counting toward graduation must be completed each year to stay on the team.

Tommy was not a remarkable student nor a remarkable athlete, but football was the "high spot" in his fifteen-year-old life. He reasoned that his junior and senior years could be ruined if he failed a class.

"I would like to change my schedule for next year," Tommy told his counselor the next day. "I might not be able to handle Algebra I. You better put me in Consumer Math."

Observation by a Superintendent, 1986

School Efforts and Why They Are Not Enough

Schools tend to reflect the changes desired by the last generation for the next generation. The emphasis swings from racial integration to the space race, B. F. Skinner to Dr. Spock, "See Dick Run" to "The Cat in the Hat," or the war on poverty to the war on drugs. The burden of proof for the efforts of education, however, seems to fall on the failures rather than the successes.

When the nation fixes its sights on a problem, schools must respond by adopting strategies designed to precipitate the solution. This creates a dilemma for educators. At least 12 years is required to move a test sample through the educational assembly line. By the time the product is turned out, a new crisis has captured national attention, a new administration has taken office, and a new product is expected. There is not much applause for the last batch.

World War II has become the benchmark for measuring modern progress and change. American education prior to that time had been primarily aimed toward providing the majority of students with the necessary reading/writing/computation skills to go back to the farm or enter the industrial mill. The remaining students were given a classical education for college entrance. For our purpose we will deal with measurable changes in school demographics compiled by the U.S. Department of Education since the 1940's. (Actually, in 1940 about 75% of the school-age population dropped out...and nobody particularly cared.) During the last fifty years, greater efforts were exerted to enroll and keep enrolled every school-age boy and girl.

Drawing a statistical profile of schools during this period also paints a picture of a changing America. Movement from the great industrial period to an age of communication and technology has exerted tremendous pressure on schools, their walls, their teachers, their equipment, their programs, and their students.

The Almanac of the American People (Biracree, 1987) indicates an average

American adult in 1940 had not completed the ninth grade and worked as a manual laborer or service worker. By 1970, an average person had finished high school and chances were greater as a white-collar worker. In the 1980's, the average American finished one year of college. Today's jobs require more brains and less brawn.

In 1961 nearly 15% of classroom teachers lacked a college degree. In the middle seventies this figure had been reduced to about 1%. In 1986 those teaching without a bachelor's degree accounted for only 0.3%. The number holding a master's degree or above had increased to over half of all public school teachers by the mid-1980's (National Education Association, 1987).

New information and technology have expanded the curriculum, as well as the textbooks. Man's walk on the moon, computer technology, advanced weaponry, telecommunications, and human organ transplants are considerations only dreamed of in the 1940's classroom. As schools began to serve a larger and larger percentage of the school-age population, programs were developed to meet the social needs of students. Today's schools may take responsibility for drug and alcohol abuse education, sex education, and parenting classes.

To cope with such overwhelming changes, schools must have the support of their communities. The involvement of businesses, parents, civic organizations, along with individual community members, government, and the media, requires a commitment to meaningful education. The incentive for this commitment must grow out of an understanding of the students' needs, the problems which face them entering society, and the demands of the world of work. In order to create this understanding, partnerships between the private sector and education have evolved as a problem-solving coalition.

Emergence of Public/Private Sector Partnerships

Cooperation between schools and the private sector is certainly not brand new. Volunteerism has been abundant in school/community relations and is an inherent trait of American democracy. Many businesses and industrial corporations have helped education through gifts of money, materials, scholarships, awards, cooperative work-study programs, speakers, tour activities, and other forms of support. Schools have provided their communities with exhibits, performances, shared use of facilities, community-education courses, and athletic events.

Profit is not a dirty word. A partnership must, in fact, have long-term profitable results for all participants.

The new aspect of partnership is the formal structuring of programs designed to maximize the use of financial and human resources in meeting present and future challenges to education. A corporation may contribute to its own self-interest through assistance which generates valuable employees. Learning experiences can be enhanced by creative participation of volunteers in the classrooms. Leadership from business can assist in identifying future directions through service on an advisory team or task force.

Some of the larger cities in the country gained presidential recognition in the early 1980's for their organization of partnerships or adopt-a-school activities. Among these were New York, Baltimore, Boston, Denver, Cleveland, Dallas, and Los Angeles.

In 1984 the first National Symposium on Partnerships in Education was held. More than 35,000 partnerships were identified in American schools. Terrel H. Bell (then

Secretary of Education) observed: "The purpose of this initiative is to stimulate national awareness of the crucial role the private sector can play in providing our children with a bright educational future."(Business/Education Partnerships...Investments in Tomorrow)

The passage of South Carolina's Education Improvement Act of 1984 was the result of business-partnership committees which studied public school needs and recommended improvements. Business leaders have served on a committee which monitored how well the provisions have been working.

A major recommendation in the act itself was to "create more effective partnerships between schools, parents, businesses, and the community." South Carolina was also one of the first states to encourage partnerships through state department coordination and networking.

Partnership programs have sprung up all across the country. Many of the activities outlined by these partnerships are designed to improve attendance and keep kids in school. Others support the expanded use of technology and innovative instructional change.

By 1989 the United States Department of Education estimated that 140,000 partnerships were in place involving aspects of education with business, industry, and the community (Education Update, 1989).

All partnership activities have not met with immediate success, however. A program which only seeks to "hit up a business" for items which should be covered by the school budget is not participating in true partnership. A business, on the other hand, which seeks access to a captive audience for the distribution of advertising materials has not understood the goals of collaborative effort.

For meaningful results, a partnership program requires more than dangling scholarship money in hopes of improving test scores. Successful partnership programs are those that match needs and resources in ways that enrich and enhance the classroom experience for students.

Successful partnership programs are those that match needs and resources in ways that enrich and enhance the classroom experience for students.

When the expectations of either private or public sector take on a self-serving attitude, the results are disappointing. Some give-away programs may have glittering immediate or short-term results but will fail miserably in the long run.

Profit is not a dirty word. A partnership must, in fact, have long-term profitable results for all participants. Business reaps the benefits of a quality work force. The community benefits from an enhanced quality of life and tax base, and schools discover an upward spiral of community support for education producing more time, energy, and resource involvement for more students.

The efforts of community partnership must be directed toward the creation of meaningful educational experiences and keeping kids involved in them. The results for everyone are mutually rewarding.

Levels of Partnership

A truly valuable partnership, like any good friendship, does not happen through a single chance encounter. It must grow out of understanding and mutual trust created through working together, laughing together, sharing woes, and shouldering loads.

Levels of understanding are reached as both parties make the effort to go a layer deeper into their responsibilities to one another.

In drawing an outline of increasingly effective levels of partnership, it should be noted that beginning at any stage represents positive growth.

1. **Awareness of Education - Knowledge**: At the awareness level, the business or community partner is in a sympathetic observer position. Knowledge of the existence of education and some superficial information have been acquired, but nothing of substance has really taken place yet.

2. **Involvement in Education - Knowledge and Action**: Involvement level occurs when knowledge increases to the point that the partner is motivated to invest time and energy. In the world of business and industry, time will, more often than not, equate to financial considerations. When knowledge is complemented by an investment, significant actions will take place. These activities cause administrators of the partnership to feel quite good about themselves, and a community support base favoring the education system can be built at this level. Bond referendums can be passed. Scholarships, various incentives, advisory councils, foundations, and recognition activities typically develop here, and the school climate is enhanced greatly. Many partnerships, however, do not progress much beyond this point. While everyone may reap great satisfaction from their endeavors, it is easy for more pressing problems to distract the participants. An economic crisis in the community, a shift in population, or a simple player change such as the retirement of a school principal or transfer of a corporate executive can easily slow activity or stop the partnership in its tracks.

3. **Collaboration With Education - Knowledge, Action, Innovation**: If the activities in the involvement level lead to innovative growth, then full partnership with the community starts to emerge. At this level, the sharing of ideas, skills, and techniques becomes possible. Models and research in education are given serious consideration, and some may be selected for piloting or adoption with shared responsibilities. Accountability at this level involves more than mere national averages and mass testing to produce measurable results. Transactions between businesses, community entities, and education affect and reciprocally influence each other. Change begins to occur, and the effect is felt by students.

A strong community force exists at the collaboration level. Businesses assist in bringing schools together with a variety of interested parties--parents, civic groups, government agencies, and the students themselves--in a problem-solving network. Businesses become involved with cooperative education, mentoring, summer job programs, and vocational education. Many levels of communication are established, and educators are involved as team members with their communities. Problems facing educators are not couched in ambivalence. Restructuring becomes less frightening. Funding becomes available for training and material resources necessary for change. Accountability is measured through student, teacher, and community satisfaction relating to the mastery of skills necessary for employment.

Levels of partnership do not necessarily act as sequential steps, and some activities may progress to the collaborative stage rather quickly. By the same token, a partnership may begin as an adopt-a-school relationship in the involvement level and stay there, functioning supportively but never reaching any deeper toward change.

Obviously, as with a friendship, the risks of rejection or disappointment increase as the levels deepen. It is imperative that any partnership program which aspires to be more than a decorative publicity gimmick be planned and coordinated in an orderly fashion. Management of and dedication to the program are critical to its success.

Structuring a Community Partnership Program

She stood in front of the secretary's desk, shifted her weight, and supported the lower part of her back with her hand.

"Here's the form you gave me. The doctor signed it."

"Fine." The secretary smiled with a practiced expression to hide her own dismay. "Let us know when you are ready to go out to have your baby, and we will try to have a homebound teacher located for you. Remember, you get five hours per week."

"Listen, if I get to my due date and still haven't gone, can I still go to school? I don't want to miss too much. I'm 'sposed to graduate this year. I'll lose the whole year if I flunk. I might never get to go back."

Overheard Conversation, 1988

A Blueprint for Planning

It has been pointed out that the concepts of partnership and volunteerism are not new. To develop an ideal approach to building a successful program, it is not necessary to re-invent the proverbial wheel. In drawing a blueprint for the structure, the ideal plan can be developed by looking at successful programs and choosing methods that work. Sample materials and model projects accompany the planning steps in the remaining chapters.

An effective partnership is one in which there is a natural matching of needs and resources. Any activities which request contributions based purely on expressed needs may find those needs met over a short term but will not produce lasting interaction of the participants. For this reason, teachers, administrators, school boards, as well as community representatives, need to be involved in the informational stages of planning a partnership.

It is also imperative that any community interaction by any name, be it partnership, adopt-a-school, or coalition for education be conducted through two-way channels of communication. Asking for assistance without assessing needs, matching them to available resources, or communicating recognition and results doom the activity to an early demise.

The reader may quickly see this process as not necessary in order to have donated an additional computer for the library or a colorful pride banner for the hallway. We are not talking about philanthropy. We are studying partnerships that address school problems, specifically youths who are potential dropouts. A bake sale to buy a banner or a business contribution for a computer may involve parents or inform a business of school inadequacies, but do little to address the students' needs unless these activities are part of an organized program, designed to motivate an entire community, including its school system, into taking positive roles in addressing the problems.

The size of the school system makes little difference. It may be inner-city, low-income, a gleaming suburban Utopia, or a rural single-school K-12 district. The same principles of **planning ahead** and **involving people** in the process apply.

Asking for assistance without assessing needs, matching them to available resources, or communicating recognition and results dooms the activity to an early demise.

The following steps outline major considerations in planning for a successful community partnership program. Suggested processes and sample materials are provided from an effective community partnership program. CLASP (Community Leadership and Support Program) was developed for Rock Hill, South Carolina and is the source for these materials.

District Needs Assessment

A school district, including the administrators and board of trustees, will be ahead of the game if they have looked at needs and established goals. If no goals have been set, a districtwide needs assessment or planning retreat is recommended. Input should be gathered from as many sources as possible. A sample list of goals may include rather broad areas of concern. Examples of established goals may involve statements such as these:

1. **Increase the competency level of all graduates**: Knowledge must be expanded as skills and abilities are developed more fully for all students. In addition to the basics, this should include exposure to the arts, understanding of technology and its use, and acceptance of a healthy lifestyle. Students must better their ability how to learn and to apply that learning creatively in their lives.

2. **Increase the international/national literacy of all graduates**: Knowledge about the world itself and about the increasing interdependence of the world's economies and cultures is vital for all students. Students must have the ability to function in a highly competitive global economy.

3. **Increase in all students the development of higher level thinking skills**: In addition to learning basic knowledge and being able to apply that knowledge in appropriate situations, students must be able to think abstractly; to evaluate and analyze information; and to apply it in unique ways to solve problems.

4. **Improve the self-concept level of students in school**: All students should feel good about themselves in the educational setting. Each should have a sense of belonging and contributing. Each should experience success related to the school community.

Program Leadership

Dedication and enthusiasm on the part of the program coordinator are essential to success. Usually that person is a district office coordinator. However, some business alliances, such as a chamber of commerce, will initiate and support the position. An educator whose responsibilities have been increased by the addition of partnership coordination or a program given mere lip-service by the superintendent runs the risk of doing more damage than good to the image of schools in a community. Commitment is essential. As the program grows, it requires increasing amounts of time and dedication.

School-level leadership usually falls on the principal who certainly needs full administrative support. The best school-based leadership involves a committee which may include a parent volunteer and several teachers.

Board Policy

To ensure dedication to community partnership, board policy permitting and encouraging involvement must be established. Any existing policy which limits material contributions or student participation may be amended to exempt those activities of formal partners in the program. The formalization process verifies the instructional value of the activities and thereby provides an exception. It is a good idea to draw up a formal partnership agreement to convey understanding. Major activities of the partnership must be stated. The business partner and school principal or program coordinator should sign the agreement along with the district director of instructional activities. The object is to signify agreement on the instructional value in compliance with board policy.

Policy examples from Rock Hill CLASP are presented here as models. A formal agreement form appears in the appendix.

Board Policy Model

The district supports effective partnerships among schools, parents, community, and business. Such partnerships contribute to the education of students in our district.

It is, therefore, the policy of the district to:

- Strengthen the involvement of parents in the education of their children
- Increase participation of business and industry in public schools
- Broaden community involvement in our schools
- Establish awards and recognition for individuals and firms who contribute to effective partnerships.

To strengthen the involvement of parents in the education of their children, the school district expects the following:

a. Encouragement by professional staff of parent-teacher conferences in each school
b. Opportunities for parents to assist in developing educational programs for their children
c. Opportunities for parents to serve on councils, to discuss academic achievement of schools, and to become involved in parent-teacher groups.

To increase participation of business and industry in our schools, the school district expects the following:

a. School personnel are encouraged to obtain advice and suggestions from the business community
b. Business organizations are encouraged to have their members become involved in efforts to strengthen the schools.
c. School personnel work with businesses to establish Adopt-A-School or other partnership programs.
d. Schools encourage the support of education foundations.
e. Schools establish partnerships with business and industry which are mutually beneficial.

To broaden community involvement in schools, the district expects the following:

a. Schools establish volunteer programs
b. Schools encourage civic and professional organizations to participate in local Adopt-A-School or other partnership programs
c. Schools implement an effective public information program to inform citizens about the schools and about the achievements of students.

To establish awards and recognition of individuals and firms who contribute to effective partnerships, the school district expects the following:

a. Schools will document all types of volunteer support and community partnerships.
b. A formalization process will be followed for partnerships to insure mutual

understanding.

c. An inventory of school-community cooperation will be kept for the purpose of evaluation and renewal.

Additional Sample Policy

Gifts include any donation of time, services, materials, or money. All gifts, grants, and bequests shall become district property.

The superintendent shall set up criteria to be met in the acceptance of gifts and the procedure for examining and evaluating offers of gifts.

Advertising in the Schools. No advertising of commercial products or services of organizations other than approved community partners for that school shall be permitted in school buildings or on school grounds or properties. Publications of the school system shall not contain any advertising. News articles reporting on community partnership activities are permissible.

Public Performances by Students. School bands, orchestras, and choruses will not perform for local businesses or commercial firms unless it is an activity of approved and established community partners. Band, orchestras, and choruses shall not perform for private individuals. School bands, orchestras, and choruses may perform at non-profit activities, such as parades, concerts, and public ceremonies.

Teacher and Administrator Commitment

One would think, at first glance, that school personnel would be enthusiastically in favor of partnerships. Not necessarily! Many attitudes exist in educational circles which are outgrowths of historical incidents. Strife over integration, prayer-in-the-school issues, humanism, Darwinism, and other milestone legal battles, coupled with curious parents and various self-appointed critics in the press, have served to make educators more than just a bit wary of community involvement.

Much can be accomplished, but not if the program is perceived from within as an expensive and exhausting addition to the existing workload.

Public relations or partnership coordinators for schools have experienced the greatest resistance usually from within the school system. A sympathetic, honest understanding of this attitude and the reasons for it dictates a well-organized orientation program for principals and teachers. A component of the district public relations plan must include staff development. Much can be accomplished, but not if the program is perceived from within as an expensive and exhausting addition to the existing workload.

The following tips should be considered in preparing educators for partnership:

- The positive attitude of the superintendent is critical to success.
- Identify those schools with sound existing public relations plans to participate in the pilot project.
- Conduct summer inservice training for principals designed to inspire and inform them of the intentions of the partnership program.
- Bring the pilot group of principals into contact with one of the major businesses in the community and let the CEO share some insights.
- Ask participating schools if they would be interested in a partnership.(Some may already have a good basis in progress.)
- Assist the principals in informing teachers of the goals of partnership.

- Match the prepared schools with the interests from the community with consideration of expressed needs and resources.

Involving Partners in the Framework

Planning Process

The purpose of an overall workable plan for a partnership program is not only to insure initial acceptance, but provide the basis for continuity. The formula is simple. Plan...then do it!

A single mission statement around which to build objectives and strategies will clarify the intentions of partnership for both private and public sectors. The old KISS (keep-it-simple-stupid) theory is applicable. The focus of all activities is on students. Therein lies the mission statement. When the needs of the students are fulfilled through the activities of schools in their communities, a true dropout prevention program is in operation. Strategies can be as multifaceted and complex as the kids themselves. The mission, however, remains the same...enhancing the school experience for kids.

The following is a sample outline of the mission statement and strategy plan for the first year of CLASP partnerships.

The Mission Plan

The mission is to identify means of enriching and enhancing the school experience for students through partnerships with the community.

Objective 1 - To establish a comprehensive program to guide and stimulate volunteerism in schools.

Strategies:
- Principals will be contacted for input and involvement.
- Materials will be designed for documenting and insuring commitment.
- A handbook will be developed for a districtwide volunteer program.
- New sources of volunteerism will be identified and explored, such as senior citizens, handicapped persons, and grandparents.
- Schools will be identified to pilot new materials.
- New means of documenting and rewarding guest speakers will be identified.

Objective 2 - To initiate partnerships between schools and community organizations to include business, industry, and civic groups.

Strategies:
- Business, industry and other civic groups will be contacted and informed of the Adopt-a-School program.
- Board policy will be modified to facilitate the gifts of time, materials, and resources from the community.
- A pilot group of adopters from the community will be identified and will act as a task force for the pilot program.
- A group of 6 to 8 schools will be identified to participate in a pilot program.
- Needs assessments will be conducted by the pilot schools.
- Resource inventories will be conducted by the pilot adopters.
- A workshop will be planned in August for principals, teachers, and partners from the private sector.
- Materials will be designed to stimulate interaction among the schools and

community, as well as instruments for contacting, documenting and insuring commitment in partnerships.

Objective 3 - Identify and implement means of feedback and recognition of organizations and individuals for the purpose of insuring satisfaction, continuation, and growth.

Strategies:
- The format of handbooks will lend itself to evaluation and updating.
- The program will be monitored, and data will be collected for evaluation.
- Plans will be made for recognition through pins, certificates, luncheons, or other appropriate means.
- Evaluation by participants and school district administrators will dictate alteration and growth.
- Formalization of adoptions will include a certificate of partnership suitable for display.

Informing the Community

Introducing the concept of partnership to the community will require an inviting opportunity to become informed hosted by the schools. An early morning breakfast sponsored by the district is usually well-received by business people.

Cooperation on the part of the local chamber of commerce or its equivalent makes the job easier. The chamber can provide lists of names and addresses and identify influential community leaders who have expressed interest in education. The object is to identify people who are at a positive level of awareness.

Another very beneficial strategy in informing the community is the establishment of a partnership committee or education task force. This group of 8 to 12 highly motivated citizens may exist within the chamber of commerce structure or can be established as a separate entity to serve the school system. Such a group may already be in operation or may emerge from interest in the initial informational meeting.

For the purpose of example, it is assumed that a breakfast is chosen as the method to inform the business leaders of the community. The following outline will assist in planning:

1. **Guest List**. The example is for a city of about 50,000. It can work with a much smaller group in a smaller town but needs to be selective in a much larger city. Identify about 150 leaders including:
   - Mayor
   - Appropriate members of local government
   - Representation from local colleges or technical centers
   - Superintendent and assistants
   - Business and civic organizations
   - Principals from each school
   - News media
2. **Invitations**. These need to be mailed no less than two weeks and no more than three weeks ahead. Include:
   - Time
   - Date
   - Location
   - Type of function (i.e. breakfast)
   - Brief statement of purpose

Who is doing the inviting
RSVP

In the first year, a letter from the superintendent may be more effective than a printed invitation.

3. **Speakers.** A "big name" speaker may attract a crowd, but such a strategy creates a danger of distracting from the primary purpose. A format that works might include:
   - •Welcome message - Superintendent
   - •Testimonial - local leader with volunteer experience
   - •Explanation of partnership - partnership coordinator
   - •Closing remarks - chairperson of school board
4. **Printed materials.** A packet containing information about the school district should be presented to each guest. Survey materials may be included in this packet.
5. **Tips**
   - • Follow-up phone calls help assure a good turnout.
   - • Keep the agenda brief and running smoothly.
   - • Point with pride to existing positive attitudes and activities.
   - • It is recommended that this be at the expense of the district, even if you can't afford too much.
   - • August (just before school begins) is good timing for everyone.

To ensure a working list of prepared potential partners, provide a survey. Greater success can be predicted for a partner who is interested enough to step forward and become involved in the creation of the program. " Banging on doors" and "twisting arms" to get lots of names on the partnership roster prove to be counterproductive in the end.

The survey must also provide the participants with recognition of existing activities and compliment their valuable input. Be sure the survey encourages them to contribute to an inventory of support and to share ideas. A sample survey for a breakfast meeting is contained in the appendix.

A Planning Guide for Partnership Activities

The planning of a blueprint for creating community involvement ensures stability as the building of partnership takes place and the framework of activities begin to take shape. The school and the partner may need some guidance in deciding what activities are the best match of needs and resources. The following guide and materials is helpful in putting together a good framework.

Communications Planning

1. Conduct a needs assessment with teachers and staff (appendix).
2. Compile a list of known needs from which the partner may identify an interest or material match.
3. Do not expect that a partnership will have activities in all categories of the plan or fill more than one or two major needs.
4. Go over the planning guide with a committee from the school and more than one representative from the partner to ensure as much creativity and continuity as possible.
5. Caution all planning committee members to keep time and energy involvement as their main focus. Once the partner understand the needs and goals of the school, funding tends to take care of itself.

Categories for Planning

Student Motivation and Assistance - Activities involving direct contact or interaction with students

ACTION PLANNING GUIDE 1

Student Motivation and Assistance	Participants	Leaders	Materials	Dates	Location
• Classroom Guest Speaker					
• Tutoring or Mentoring					
• Job Shadowing					
• Tours					
• Special Events					
• Incentives					
• Materials and Equipment					

Teacher/Staff Appreciation and Assistance - Activities designed to focus on the teachers and other staff members

ACTION PLANNING GUIDE 2

Teacher/Stafff Appreciation and Assistance	Participants	Leaders	Materials	Dates	Location
• Staff Development (Personal & Professional)					
• Incentive/Entertainment					
• Recognition/Scholarships					

Community Service - Activities which enhance school/community, school/parent, or school/student relations.

ACTION PLANNING GUIDE 3

Community Service	Participants	Leaders	Materials	Dates	Location
• Sponsorship of Extracurricular Activity					
• Publication/Communications					
• Enhancement of Facilities					

Specific Assignments for Who, What, When, and Where

1. Participants - Who will participate?
2. Leadership - Who will take responsibility for coordinating/conducting activities?
3. Materials and Arrangements - What is needed and what arrangements are made?
4. Timeline - Target dates for activities
5. Location - Where will the activity take place?

*Partnership Appreciation and Assistance - Activities or services the school or program provides the partner

ACTION PLANNING GUIDE 4

Partnership Appreciation & Assistance	Participants	Leaders	Materials	Dates	Location
• Publication/Printed Material					
• Student Products (Music, Art, etc.)					
• Utilization of School Facilities					
• Special Events Invitation					
• Workshops/Orientations					

*All planning should include category 4.

Evaluation

Evaluation from the principle players in partnership is essential for continuation. Some feedback will take place naturally through recognition activities and informal opportunities for exchange of ideas. This, however, usually produces only a positive picture of what is taking place rather than a critical analysis for growth.

Some degree of serendipity will emerge in any partnership program. The casual invitation that develops into a festival or the single, heartfelt statement expressed by a kid can be the catalyst for activities which propel otherwise ordinary folks to touch eternity.

Nevertheless, the coordinator needs an inventory of what is happening and how it is progressing. Nothing is more disheartening to a program than for a partner to end the year saying, "No one ever called me!" or a teacher who "never knew the school had a partner." This can happen without evaluation.

It is imperative, at this point, that the importance of evaluation be understood and built into the planning process from its conception. A later section deals with the life of partnerships after the first year and sample materials can be found in the appendix.

Creating Deeper Levels of Partnership

A locally-owned industry had been the business partner of the junior high school for four years. Many enrichment activities and in-kind contributions had assisted the science fair, vocational welding class, and art and home economics departments. A member from the business served on the school council. The company owner's favorite project had been furnishing a group guidance area in a living room atmosphere.

On this day, the district community partnership coordinator was sitting on the sofa listening to a report from three women who were wives of the industry executive staff. They had piloted a program designed to bestow "the magic of caring" on students not working up to their potential and exhibiting signs of disconnecting from school. A group of volunteers were being trained by the guidance staff with books and video material purchased for the program by the school partner.

As the partnership coordinator listened to the experiences which had produced this well-planned training session, her eyes fell on a bulletin board with handmade letters. It read: "We are each of us angels with only one wing and we can only fly embracing each other."

A Rationale for Dropout Prevention Partnerships

Most men (and women), according to Henry David Thoreau, "lead lives of quiet desperation." On his continuum of satisfaction, most folks are neither rewarded by life enough to be fulfilled nor disappointed enough to be miserable, thereby placing themselves somewhere in the middle. Applying the bell curve to this continuum, we can expect a rather small percentage of people to be vivacious participants in life and at the other end...dropouts. Those from mid-point down are at-risk in varying degrees of disconnecting. If one applies the "quiet desperation" theory to the school-age population, an image of at-risk students can be conjured up in the mind's eye.

Being at risk to drop out of school is not a phenomenon that only occurs between 16 and 17 years old. Factors which place a child at risk may be present at birth and compounded by additional adversity as life progresses.

Certain burdens are placed on children through no fault of their own. Each child's baggage is different in weight and composition. A child may, for example, be born with a visual problem. If this is compounded by an unconventional family setting or minority racial status, the child enters school with at least a strike or two against him or her. If the student fails to learn to read, is retained a year, is physically abused and has a low sense of self esteem, he or she becomes increasingly at risk. Skipping classes, using drugs, depression, and death orientation may lead to dropping out of school as well as dropping out of life.

Depressing as this progression of negative factors is, it is compounded by another important ingredient. A lack of coping skills to deal with disappointment or failure leaves

even the most successful students at risk of dropping out. If a young man is born handsome, matures at the perfect age to excel in sports, is empowered with a bright mind, and never has a dental cavity, or a young woman has charming curls and dimples, a straight-A report card, and no need for braces or contact lens, the world assumes this will be the "couple most likely to succeed." True, the chances of being at risk are lessened, but what about coping skills? If he is arrested and convicted of a DUI and she becomes pregnant at 17, a lack of satisfactory skills for coping with disappointments may create a downward spiral and increase the degree of at-riskness for dropping out of school and life in general without assistance, guidance, and caring.

Partnerships which support enriched, interesting, child-centered classrooms also assist in developing students who have skills for life.

Other kids for whom life and school seem to be a series of "What did I do wrong now?" experiences develop an apathetic veneer. Teachers recognize this kind of negative coping skill for failure in the glazed-over eyes and tuned-out expressions of children who no longer are willing to take the risks necessary for learning.

Some children seem to be endowed by nature with an internal buoy that brings them back to the surface quickly while others sink under very little weight and drift steadily to the bottom of the pool. Each child and situation is different, but if one piles on enough baggage, any child can drown.

Activities of community partnership must, therefore, be designed to make a difference for students in two ways:

- Reduction of factors which cause children to become at risk of dropping out.
- Encouragement for children to develop good coping skills and self-concepts for maturation in life.

Input from business, industry, and civic organizations woven meaningfully into the involvement of parents, teachers, and the students themselves creates a total community partnership program which develops dropout prevention activities.

Although many valuable partnerships begin with financial needs being fulfilled, it becomes apparent that give-away programs which simply make materials easily accessible for schools incorporate little in the area of time and energy involvement. Over the long term, such partnerships fail to produce much of anything in the way of dropout prevention, even though the school district may be financially enhanced.

On the other hand, partnerships which support enriched, interesting, child-centered classrooms also assist in developing students who have skills for life. Citizens who model good citizenship for students through their contact with schools make lasting positive impressions. Adults who take an interest in individual students will have the greatest impact of all.

In addressing the dropout problem, it is again important to remember that there are official and unofficial dropouts. Many students who actually stay in school and complete a high school program are not truly satisfied or successful. They are not prepared to survive, but rather drift along in Thoreau's state of quiet desperation. It makes sense to assume that dropout prevention at its best does not simply target a floundering few but, rather, enhances the whole school experience for every student.

If the need for dropout prevention is so clearly apparent, then why isn't every

community vigorously involved in partnership activities? The reason is rather simple. We do not have a universal, perfect formula or a fool-proof model for partnership with uniform measurable results; otherwise, everyone would be using it. We do agree that there are valid societal and economic reasons for changes in education. The support of communities is necessary to formulate and fund these changes.

Before proceeding into examples of working partnerships, ponder the following considerations in review of what has been discussed in previous chapters:

- The needs and resources of each community differ. Matching needs and resources for a 5,000-square-mile school district in Anchorage, Alaska, will be different from Boston, Massachusetts. A rural Kansas school district of 500 students could have different partnership activities than Los Angeles, California.

- The definition of partnership is often confused with donations. This produces rather decorative, superficial partnership programs with disappointing results. Philanthropy, however, can be put to very constructive use through educational foundations as another organized style of community support.

- The level of support for education varies from community to community. A well-informed city with a history of positive attitudes and locally generated tax dollars for the educational system enters partnerships at a deeper level of involvement than one which has long been satisfied with outdated facilities and unenlightened notions.

- Resistance on the part of educators to accept partnerships as time well invested is compounded by a fear of losing control.

"CEOs must realize that there are serious systemic and structural problems in the schools—on the insides of schools. The culture must be changed, and the change must be radical."
Theodore Sizer, Chairman, Brown University Education Department

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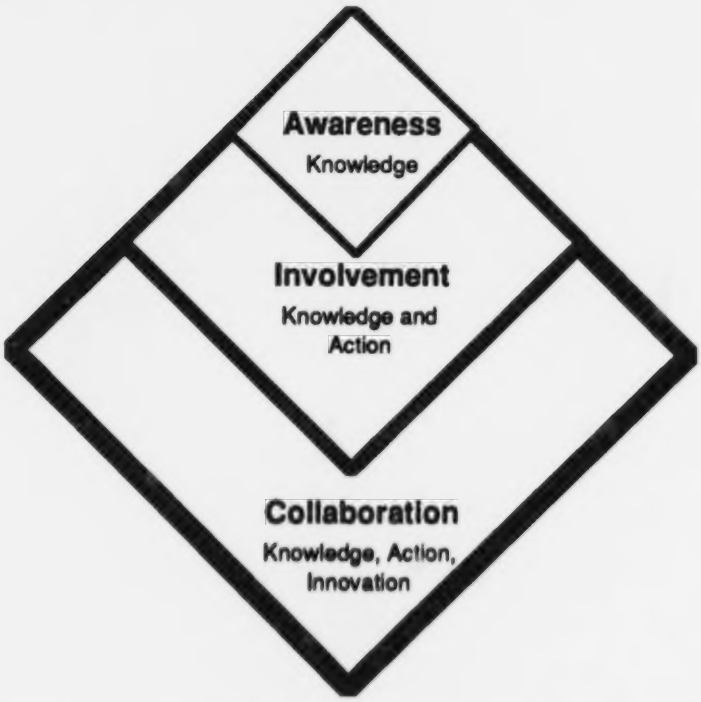
Partnership will not exist until the first move is made. The only truly wrong attempt is to do nothing at all. We have examined the problem and how to get started. We know it is crucial that communities set goals for revitalizing education for kids in a rapidly changing world. We know that dedicated adults who provide positive experiences make a difference in kids' lives. Now let's get at the problem.

Going A Level Deeper

Going deeper requires some knowledge of where one is beginning. A graphic review of the deepening levels of partnership may help the superintendent, organizer, or coordinator identify a starting point. Expectations and examples presented in the remainder of this chapter assist in developing an understanding of what works by presenting ideas and examples. It should be remembered that any level depicted is a positive beginning point. It is simply a matter of how far one wants to go and how one plans to get there.



Business and Industry Partnership Levels

Awareness of Education

Knowledge based on:

- Information - primarily local media
- Published state and national rankings based on test scores
- Value of work force readiness from employer's perspective
- Hearsay and opinion

Involvement in Education

Knowledge is enhanced by **actions** such as:

- Information gathering - national news, magazines, and publications
- Guest speaker
- Tour provider
- Attendance at school functions (concert, open house, game, etc.)
- Membership on committees - advisory councils, Chamber Education Task Force, bond referendum team, or community partnership committee
- Material and financial considerations
- Job release time for employees to participate in partnership

Collaboration With Education

Knowledge and **actions** become directed toward **innovative joint efforts** including:

- Growth through shared skills and techniques
- Proactivity through a cycle of research, development, and evaluation to produce accountability
- Transactions for public and private sectors to affect and reciprocally influence each other

Awareness (Business and Industry)

The first step in partnership is establishing contact between the players. Most communities begin at the awareness level with a few citizens and schools contributing on their own at the involvement and collaboration levels. The existence of informed partners at this level is dependent on the "self-starter" style of a handful of educators and business representatives. The importance of what goes on in the schools and how well the job is being done may be recognized by businesses through observations concerning the students who are hired, with or without high school diploma credit. Conclusions drawn at the awareness level can also be based on publication of results from local SAT scores, basic skills testing, and other norm-referenced testing instruments without explanation or caution given to interpretation of this data.

Much of the perceived effectiveness of the local education system at the awareness level is the result of hearsay. Unfortunately, as with any service-related industry, the consumer doesn't say much until a problem surfaces. Hearsay often begins with an unfortunate experience which truly justifies concern but may turn into gossip or sensationalized local news. Without active involvement on the part of business and industry, this perspective may not be balanced by empathy for the problems and positions of the schools. The vantage point at the awareness level includes knowledge but very little contact with the educational processes. This level is typically plagued by apathy and indifference with the potential for negative responses to tax increases for education and difficult bond referendum passage.

It is essential in partnership activities that consideration be given to both participants. The school's perspective and contribution comprises the second half of partnership.

The education or public sector side of the partnership may also make assumptions at the awareness level concerning the demands of business and industry based on fragments of knowledge or traditionally accepted notions. Among these are "hat-in-hand" attitudes regarding contributions, lack of respect for teaching as a profession, comparative lifestyles of educators and business leaders, and assumptions concerning working conditions.

Appraisal of the awareness level may seem overly bleak. Negative attitudes are not necessarily the situation in an awareness level-community. The ever-present potential for unsubstantiated negative attitudes and the need for realistic communication, however, cannot be overlooked. This, in itself, creates a supportive case for partnership.

To begin at the awareness level, the following checklist for beginning a successful program plan must be reviewed:

- ✓ Designate program leadership person
- ✓ Conduct district and school-based needs assessment
- ✓ Establish board policy permitting partnerships
- ✓ Provide teacher/administrator training for commitment to partnership
- ✓ Inform the business leaders, through communication, of a plan for a partnership program
- ✓ Conduct an inventory and evaluate existing contributions of time,energy and resources
- ✓ Study successful programs and partnership activities from as many sources as possible. ("Sharing" is probably the most frequently used word in partnership.)

Careful planning with consideration for all perspectives ensures the greatest success. Disappointment occurs when expectations are not fulfilled. As the next level

begins to emerge through involvement, it is imperative that the expected results are appropriate for the activity. Effectiveness grows as initial activities expand and the level of involvement deepens.

Involvement (Business and Industry)

Activity, combined with greater knowledge of schools, creates involvement. The actions of developing meaningful partnerships have been likened to the development of a lasting friendship. The first activities may be rather obvious kinds of contacts with the emphasis on support by business with education on the receiving end. These are not wrong and should not be interpreted as such. These activities are worthwhile and stepping stones to more meaningful types of participation in partnership based on matched needs and resources.

A list of support activities resulting from initial contact with partners could include the following:

- Guest speakers
- Facility tours
- Teacher appreciation
- Incentives or awards for students
- Attendance at school functions
- In-kind contributions
- Business executive as school council member

Although these are typical introductory partnership activities, they may have little effect on factors which cause students to drop out of school. As both sides of the partnership become more comfortable in their rapport, the school climate improves and opportunities develop for projects with more impact.

Through proper recognition of support, a school or district will find opportunities to involve partners in more meaningful activities incorporating more input, manpower, and teamwork.

Examples of deeper involvement include:

- Service by several members from the business with a school staff committee to plan activities as a team
- Human, financial, and material resources are organized into activities which address specific needs of at-risk students
- Regular communication between school and partner designed to foster cooperative efforts
- Evaluation responsibilities for partnership activities shared mutually between the school and partner
- Flexible partnership styles which include special programs in several schools as well as one-on-one school/business activities
- School or district facilities, expertise, and resources shared with the community.

Specific models of effective participation directed toward dropout prevention at the involvement level are packaged for convenient identification.

Carowinds Theme Park in Charlotte, NC, offers attendance incentives to surrounding school districts. A discount certificate is awarded for perfect attendance during a grading period. Attendance everyday for the entire school year earns a free day at the park. Carowinds also assists schools in providing an all-night, alcohol-free graduation party with assistance from parents and other business contributions. (FOCUS)

Muscatine, Iowa, School District works with local businesses to help students realize that a high school diploma is a worthy goal. The Project Encouragement program asks business representatives to write motivational letters to first grade students. The business person commits to corresponding with the same student for the entire educational stay in Muscatine schools. Support from teachers and parents help students with their commitment to correspond. Project Encouragement reminds the community that everyone is responsible for the education of our youth. (Partnerships in Education Journal) (FOCUS)

A small, rural school district in Argonia, Kansas, implements a community partnership program to help students gain a better understanding of the world of work. Each partner agrees to supply ideas and cooperation in meeting mutually established goals. Business personnel also serve as community education advisory council members, speakers for classes, and volunteer teachers. The Chamber of Commerce sponsors and hosts a recognition dinner for school spirit winners. Reading rewards, career simulations, and guest speakers are samples of contributions by businesses.

Schools respond by furnishing partners with clerical assistance and musical performances for special events. (FOCUS)

Collaboration (Business and Industry)

As knowledge of education grows and is enhanced by greater understanding, activities are initiated which link schools and their students more closely to the community. Business involvement with education through organized partnerships evolve into collaborative efforts producing growth, restructuring, proactivity, and reciprocal transactions.

Schools in collaboration involve staff from all levels, and several activities may occur simultaneously. Members of the partnership team contribute abundant time and energy.

Examples of successful business partnerships can be found at the collaborative level representing effective strategies for addressing dropout prevention and improved student performance. These efforts may be grouped into the following four general categories:

- Early childhood **intervention programs**
- **Restructuring** of educational delivery systems
- Job related **encouragement with incentives** for staying or re-entering
- Multilevel **communication and linkage** with the community

Samples of each strategy group are presented to assist the reader in identifying these four types of partnership activities.

Early childhood **intervention programs** assist the social and intellectual development from prenatal to kindergarten age. Such programs are based on the premise that the early years of social and intellectual development strongly influence academic performance and work skills. In addition to developmental programs for toddlers, projects can also include teaching parenting skills to young mothers and fathers.

Another facet of preschool intervention is the enhancement of child care services. There has been an increase in the number of companies supporting resource assistance for their employees in need of day care, as well as financing the training and recruitment of new child care workers.

In New York State, the Ulster County Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and Hudson Valley Mall participate in a partnership which offers child care education for high school and adult education students.

A parenting education grant from the New York State Department of Education provided BOCES with the opportunity to provide staff and supplies for the mall project. The mall donated a large store site and utilities. Equipment and materials were solicited from the community. Businesses and individuals supplied both the goods and labor to establish the model.

The lack of adequately trained child care workers and the high cost of care provided barriers to finding employees for the mall. By offering the program in a business setting, goals of quality child care as well as lab experience necessary for a course program were met. (FOCUS)

Another way in which businesses can enhance the success of students is through the support of projects that **restructure** the school experience beyond education's traditional classroom confines. Company sponsored projects can give students unique perspectives as well as insights into the world of work. Reading, writing, and computation skills take on new meaning through application.

Mentoring, shadowing, one-on-one intervention, and tutorial programs provide valuable experiences to an at-risk child. All students benefit from interaction with successful adult role models.

Business involvement produces change in the educational delivery methods through individual actions as well as networking of community efforts.

Cleveland, Ohio, companies interact with students in many ways.

Employee volunteers of GE Lighting provide tutoring, mentoring, and job-shadowing for high school students. GE also interviews students for part-time summer jobs.

Ohio Bell/An Ameritech Company uses an innovative program called Choices. This program introduces ninth graders to decision-making concepts that will help them make the right choices in their lives, including the decision to remain in school.

LTV Steel and Huntington Banks assist both teachers and students in learning about new technologies, how the Federal Reserve System operates, and Career Fair Day.

The Cleveland Clinic Foundation operates a college preparatory curriculum that emphasizes the biological and medical sciences. (FOCUS)

A tremendous number of businesses assist college-bound students with scholarship money each year. However, the promise of a scholarship alone is not enough to keep an at-risk youth in school. More realistic kinds of **encouragement and incentive programs** have been developed with corporate support.

Employees assisting with after-school tutoring or social service programs provide encouragement along with opportunities for a job or expanded education. The positive message of an individual's personal commitment combines effectively with a direct financial incentive. Work-study opportunities along with individual support and caring create an atmosphere of concern, hope, and motivation to succeed.

The Personnel and Industrial Relations Association (PIRA) in Los Angeles has formed a partnership with the Oxnard School District to assist graduating high school seniors entering the job market. Help is provided in developing professional-looking resumes, aptitude testing, and coaching in appropriate dress and conduct. Participating students are provided a list of companies having jobs matching their particular interests and skills. Mentors provide mock interview sessions to check students for effectiveness, as well as counseling to improve interview skills.

The U.S. Navy Pacific Missile Test Center at Pt. Mugu, California, developed the computer-based program that produces the customized resumes and a data bank that matches each student's qualification with specific job opportunities. (FOCUS)

Communication among leaders in a community demonstrates a commitment to collaboration. When a business becomes the leader, a team approach can bring together schools, parents, civic groups, and various agencies to explore creative solutions to the problems of students disconnecting from school. Partnerships give business and industry opportunities to observe problems firsthand and develop closer ties with the experiences of students and educators. Both parties in partnership become involved in all phases over a broad range of planning and decision-making activities. When these "up-close-and-personal" experiences are carried into the community, networking can take place and activities of the partnership acquire a broader base of support.

Rock Hill School District Three in Rock Hill, South Carolina, conducted a strategic planning activity which brought together representatives from all major community service agencies (Department of Social Services, Youth Services, Drug and Alcohol Abuse Center, et cetera) as well as law enforcement, local colleges, the Chamber of Commerce, representatives of several private businesses, school guidance and classroom representatives, and several special-interest community groups. They studied the problems of dropouts in the community, compared and reviewed services of the various agencies, and developed recommendations for a community approach to the problems.

Among the recommendations were the coordination of a hub for an information-sharing Dropout Prevention Network by the school district, monthly or bi-monthly interaction by concerned groups, inclusion of the medical community in recommendations concerning pregnant teens, and personalized presentations to groups such as the Chamber of Commerce.

The series of meetings were planned and chaired by a community representative with excellent organizational skills. Each meeting was kept to a scheduled task, and communications were mailed between meetings. The group was given a meeting schedule and goals prior to the activity. (FOCUS)

Civic Organization Partnership Levels

Many valuable partnerships function with nonprofit entities in the community. A museum, Red Cross chapter, governmental agency, service club, church, or other organization can function effectively as a school partner. Their time and energy contributions can impact directly upon students, raise funds for specific needs, or work in tandem with business and industry to achieve goals in similar levels of commitment.

Awareness of Education

Knowledge based on:

- Value of future citizenship
- Information-gathering, primarily local media
- Published state and national rankings based on test scores
- Hearsay

Involvement in Education

Knowledge is enhanced by actions such as:
- Information gathering from national news, magazines, and publications
- Acting as guest speaker
- Attendance at school functions
- Support of special programs
- Youth education included as a component of the organization's structure

Collaboration with Education

Knowledge and **actions** become directed toward innovative joint efforts:
- Provide personal growth opportunities for students through citizenship experiences
- Organize one-on-one intervention activities
- Link education component of organization with a curricular need.

Awareness (Civic Organization)

At the awareness level, individuals within the organization develop their own opinions based on information gathered independently. As part of the function of a civic group or agency, an awareness exists concerning the need to replace existing members or contributors with energetic and socially conscious new members.

Involvement (Civic Organization)

A nonprofit entity in the community may sponsor a special program or activity to fill specific needs of potential dropouts. Knowledge gathered by an individual is enhanced through a commitment of time and energy. Clubs, agencies, churches, colleges, and a variety of other civic groups may jump very quickly into deeper levels of involvement. A component of civic organizational structure may target education as a goal.

> The football team at the University of Texas adopted 36 fourth and fifth grade students as part of Austin's Adopt-A-School program. Each player met with his student once a week. The goal was improved self-esteem which translated into improved grades and attendance. The players found themselves feeling the satisfaction of being a positive role model. (FOCUS)

Collaboration (Civic Organization)

There are countless ways to provide a civic partner with opportunities for innovative contributions. Many agencies within a community need the networking capabilities of the education system in order to maximize achievement of their own goals and objectives.

Clubs, churches, and college groups are in a unique position to encourage and organize one-on-one intervention or tutoring programs. Organizations within a community are in an ideal position to offer students opportunities to receive support, as well as participate in service activities which may raise their own self-esteem.

At the collaboration level, the organization's educational goals or funding component are meaningfully matched with needs in the curriculum. Students are supported by the organization's proactivity to reduce at-risk factors and encourage personal growth.

Parents

Parents are still the most important influence on any child's attitudes. A parent may be involved directly or indirectly in a formal school partnership program by way of employment or membership in a civic group. Many parents of students in danger of dropping out, however, are not particularly comfortable with the school setting themselves.

Designing ways to involve the parents as full partners in the education of their children must be a goal for all schools. Partnerships can help address this and assist by supporting the collaborative activities for parents. These can include sponsorship of parenting classes and providing network leadership for agencies which address the home problems of potential dropouts.

Weaving parent participation into the various activities of the school through community outreach will also produce deeper levels of effectiveness for all dropout prevention activities.

In Nashville, Tennessee, a genuine partnership exists between teachers and parents as a vital element in their formula for student success.

A group of partners in Nashville is helping make it easy for parents and teachers to work together. The project is called TRANSparent and operates at Carter Lawrence Middle School.

The school has installed 10 telephone lines and the same number of answering machines so that every parent can find out about their child's educational activities every school day.

Teachers write a script each day summarizing the curriculum, homework, and suggestions for parents. The "credibility gap" is closed through this outreach, and parents are empowered to be really involved with their child's education.

During the first week the school received more than 200 calls per day from parents who listen to specific messages. The program is now reaching a majority of parents each day. (FOCUS)

Teachers and Administrators

Choosing education as a career is not an option to be taken lightly. A young person entering college may know the availability of positions, certification requirements, and degree programs necessary for employment.

The choice is not one only of logistics and opportunities. Once a person becomes involved in the lives of students, he or she becomes a dynamic factor in each child's chances for success and a link with the future. Teachers and administrators have a responsibility to the parents, the community, and the students.

Ask the next person you see "Who is the person who made the greatest difference in your life as you grew to adulthood?" The chances are high that the answer will include a brief synopsis of a very special teacher.

Any activities of partnership which assist teachers and administrators, or revitalize their contributions of time and energy, indirectly address the problems of potential dropouts.

The educational staff must be considered as a full partner in weaving a total community partnership program for dropout prevention.

A peer counseling program was developed by Norcrest Elementary School in Pompano Beach, Florida. North Broward Medical Center and Coconut Creek High School participate in this Partners in Progress program. High school students, who were formerly identified as potential dropouts themselves, are paired with elementary students who are at risk. At the same time, the youngsters have a mentor from the medical center staff who provides a role model of a working person.

High school students gain a sense of responsibility and give encouragement to the Norcrest students, and the medical center employees benefit through the opportunity to help a youngster. (FOCUS)

Students

Even the most involved and caring parents, teachers, and community members are often puzzled by the attitudes of students. The various undesirable coping skills exhibited by students manifest themselves as an increase in teen pregnancies, discipline problems, underachievement, and chemical abuse. A segment of the school population which does not seem to possess the typical at-risk factors may succumb to what is commonly classified as peer pressure if a strong, positive self-image related to learning does not exist.

There is a noticeable and admirable tendency on the part of educators to feel responsible for solving problems. Yet, the results are often the implementation of another program, test, dance, graduation party, or some other strategy designed to do something for students. Well-meaning as these activities and programs may be, they have little effect if the students themselves do not buy in or have responsibilities outside their own skins.

At the awareness level, students are knowledgeable concerning education as a requirement. They know the rules for behavior and attendance, but they conform to the system with little, if any, enthusiasm for learning. Students can be aware of education without any real commitment.

Knowledge of rules and systems is enhanced by students as they become involved in actions which enhance their learning. Choosing education as a value, meeting testing requirements, and adopting standards of behavior and attendance for completion of an educational program represent the involvement level for students.

It is not only advisable, but imperative that educators and the community accept students as full partners in effective education. Opportunities must exist within every school system and community for students to set their own expectations, experience the "natural high" of doing something worthwhile for someone else, and become creators of education for themselves. Education should be accomplished with students rather than for them.

There is the heartbreaking account of the worried mother who waits in the dark agonizing over every inch of winding road until her son or daughter enters the door, only to face an intoxicated teenager who couldn't seem to care less. "Don't you know how I feel?" she blurts out at a face with a foolish grin.

Of course not. This child has never taken responsibility for another human being...lovely manners, swimming lessons, good grades, designer jeans, but no feel for anything outside of or greater than self.

When students help other students, serve their communities, create their own expectations, and look long and hard at their own values, the collaborative level of students in partnership with education exists.

Keeping the Momentum

Both boys had been expelled in the last quarter of their ninth grade year. The charge was extortion...protection money.

Three years later, one of them was singing in the choral concert and was honored with a solo. It brought tears to the eyes of his former homeroom teacher.

"I'm so thrilled for you, Earl," she told him after the performance. "You always had a wonderful talent, but I'm especially pleased to discover you got back in school."

"Thanks. I wondered if you'd recognize me."

"Oh yes, what do you plan to do?"

"I want to graduate and get a good job. I love music and it made me like school better, but I know it's hard to ever get anywhere singin'."

"What about Andre', do you ever see him?"

"Yea. I tried gettin' him to come back, but he don't want to. He's eighteen now and got no job."

"I know, I saw him riding his bicycle down the street not too long ago. I'm so glad you came back."

She also had a lump in her throat when Earl marched across the stage at graduation to get his diploma. But what about Andre'...?

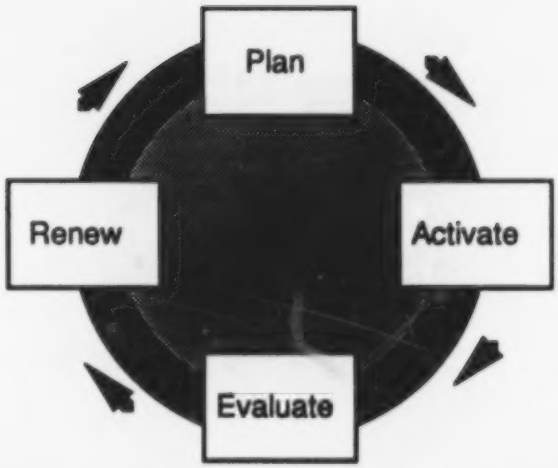
High School Choral Music Concert, Spring 1988

At the Sixth National Symposium on Partnerships in Education, a representative from the state of Arizona was addressing her remarks to James Harvey whose participation on the National Commission of Excellence in Education assisted in the production of a report, "A Nation at Risk." Arizona, reported the representative, had surveyed partnership activities in that state and determined the average life of a partnership to be 15 months. Several of those in attendance found this shocking. Mr. Harvey, however, was not surprised.

Many activities touted as partnerships in the beginning are really little more than one-shot contributions and become history after the first year. Jumping on the bandwagon of partnership because it is "the fashion" can do far more damage than good to the long-term image of effective education and dropout prevention in a community when results are misunderstood or left uncommunicated. Once a partnership is established, the systematic planning process must include monitoring of progress, documentation, recognition, and evaluation in order to foster renewal.

A meaningful and well-designed evaluation and feedback system is, perhaps, the most important component of a successful partnership.

The present structure of a school-year calendar tends to project a linear pattern. All activities seem to have a beginning in late summer and work their way toward closure as spring turns to summer again. Like rolling a pencil across a desk and letting it fall off when it reaches the other edge, partnership activities can disappear from sight. A linear pattern is not the ideal approach to partnership or, for that matter, dropout prevention. Rather, a cycle which is planned to include evaluation and renewal based on goals, strengthens the partnership and guides activities to deeper levels of commitment.



Some partnerships are one-on-one activities with an individual school. Other activities have districtwide impact while others target a specific program. Regardless of the style, each partnership should be treated as a cycle with renewal elements built into the process. These elements fall into three major categories:

- **Monitoring**
- **Public relations and recognition**
- **Evaluation and feedback**

Keeping the momentum is not a consideration to be tacked on to the end or resorted to when the partnership seems to be on shaky ground. The elements of renewal must be planned and continuous.

Monitoring

Simply stated, monitoring means "knowing what is going on." Monitoring of the partnership should be entered into by all key players. Each activity of the partnership will benefit, including assessment of needs and resources, training, planning, and management, as well as the specific projects. The players are members of the partnership planning committee which includes teachers, parents, and students along with representatives from the partner organization and the district-level partnership coordinator. Monitoring has the additional benefit of increasing the degree to which all players take "ownership" of the activities resulting in greater dedication to their success.

The monitoring process, in and of itself, does not make judgments. Documentation and communication are the primary components. The information gathered and communicated, however, is essential to the recognition and evaluation elements of renewal. Several methods of monitoring may be employed:

- Holding regular meetings of the partnership committee
- Inviting all players to view or participate in events
- Sharing of newsletters from both sides of the partnership
- Conducting formal surveys by the partnership coordinator (semi-annual/annual)
- Making use of informal communication opportunities
- Sharing decision making to adjust or fine-tune activities
- Compiling information for ease of access and reference
- Presenting an annual report to the superintendent and school board summarizing the total program (partnership coordinator)

Clearly, understanding what is going on in a partnership can serve to overcome many of the common pitfalls that lead to disappointing results. On the other hand, ill-informed participants in partnership may abandon the project and take with them negative attitudes which did not exist prior to the attempt or reinforce doubts and suspicions. The negative beliefs held by the business community regarding the inability of educators to prepare youth for work, incompetency, and lack of sensitivity will be reinforced through misunderstandings that create stronger attitudinal barriers. Likewise, without the use of good communication strategies, the private sector and community will risk being viewed by educators as self-serving, profit motivated, and insincere in their interest.

Through monitoring, an understanding is achieved which leads to deeper levels of partnership. The rapport gained encourages projects which may not produce the anticipated results to become learning and growing experiences for the participants. Modification or replacement will take place without destroying the partnership. It is not just advisable that monitoring take place; it is essential.

Public Relations and Recognition

Public relations and recognition ensure two-way communication in partnership. Two-way communication can change attitudes. Often, the first notion of public relations is, "How can we get the newspaper to run a picture?" This traditional approach through media coverage is very hard to control and often unattainable. Although informing the media is always appropriate, many more reliable means of "spreading the good word" and demonstrating appreciation are available to school partnerships.

Public relations is essential to all functions of a school or district and should never be taken lightly. Each school or district has two publics: external and internal. The external public consists of those people, organizations, and community entities not employed in the education industry. Conversely, the internal public consists of those who work in the schools or district. One is no more important than the other. The approaches may differ or overlap, but both require input and attention.

Both the school district and individual schools should have written public relations plans. Within these plans are components dealing with analysis, planning, communication, and evaluation. Following a public relations plan conveys confidence and organization. Partnership fits comfortably into the PR plan at all levels. A variety of functions within the PR plan may be employed including:

- Data collection
- Analysis of efforts
- Goal setting
- Availability of workshop and training sessions
- Development of evaluation processes
- Identification of key publics

Recognition is closely linked with public relations and renewal. Appreciation activities convey a sense of worth and esteem to the recipient. Often recognition is saved until the completion of a project or the close of the school year. It is important to remember that recognition, like public relations, must be planned, consistent, and continuous. Simple tokens of appreciation such as a smile or a "thank you" can make a huge difference in the degree of commitment and attitude of partnership participants. Since schools tend to be on the receiving end of most initial partnership activities, they need to be alert to possibilities for recognition of their partners.

Often the school principal and the teachers become so absorbed in student results that

they miss obvious opportunities for partnership recognition. One technique is to create a monthly "Tips for Partnerships" memo. This reminder works well and is also appreciated by principals. It consists of ideas briefly describing ways to communicate appreciation to partners. The tips can be conveniently printed and distributed at a monthly district principals' meeting. Ideas target holiday celebrations for the next month, sharing of opportunities, and seasonal activities. A sampling of suggested means of recognition includes:

- Holiday decorations for offices provided to partners by schools
- Inclusion of partners in school wellness activities
- Complimentary tickets to athletic events
- Complimentary tickets to concerts and plays
- Art exhibits (display in the business location)
- Hosting a business function in the school
- Lunch invitations
- Use of company logo on school newsletters
- Greeting cards (including holiday, birthday, thanks, and get well)
- Student designed gifts
- Seedlings or plants grown by students

Other recognition materials can be built into the districtwide program. Framed partnership certificates display pride when hung in both the business and the school. Certificates of appreciation may be printed or individually designed by students. An awards program to recognize outstanding contributions functions as the annual celebration of community partnership, as well as the occasion to inform participants, recruit new partners, and attract media coverage. A crystal apple, brass school bell, or engraved tray makes an appropriate trophy.

Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation is a process designed to determine the value of an activity. Feedback communicates information concerning that value back to the source of the actions.

A meaningful and well designed evaluation and feedback system is, perhaps, the most important component of a successful partnership. It also can be the most elusive. The plans for evaluation should be designed simultaneously with the project or program as it is developed. Evaluation must not be an afterthought. The process of thinking through how a project is to be evaluated can contribute to the design of the activities.

The tendency of an evaluation process is to gather information for feedback exhibiting some sort of gain or achievement. Educators tend to measure for success or failure. In partnership activities, however, projects which did not achieve the expected results may be the source of valuable information or a learning experience even when not perceived as a roaring success. The results may be the gathering of new information, shifts in priorities, or identification of areas needing revision. If the partnership is a strong, communicative relationship, the evaluation process may be as important as the results. If, however, the partnership is not adaptable to change or modification, it will flounder in disappointment.

The relationship of planning and evaluation requires careful examination of what is being evaluated and why. Ask the following two questions in the evaluation:

1. Did the program or project achieve the goals which were set?
2. Can strengths and weaknesses be identified for adjustment and correction?

As part of the planning process, the partnership committee should decide when and how often to evaluate. A school-based project can be evaluated when it is finished. Ongoing activities profit from periodic evaluation to allow for adjustment. The results may become part

of a long-term program evaluation conducted on an annual or semiannual basis by the school or district.

The next consideration is the use of evaluation for quantitative and qualitative information results. Both can be useful. Quantitative techniques require a baseline of previous data or a starting point from which to measure. This type of evaluation tends to be measurable in numerical terms. Examples include comparing yearly figures on dropout rates, numbers of expulsions, test scores, ages of dropouts, and distribution of minorities or male to female ratios. It is important that the means of counting or gathering information be the same for the baseline as for the results.

Qualitative evaluation may be oriented toward survey and opinion results rather than numerical findings, but it also benefits from a base of information. A clearer picture of what has been accomplished can be seen if the same questions are asked before a project begins. Showing a measurable qualitative gain or reduction is more difficult and timing is important. In fact, attempts to make qualitative results measurable may interfere with the effectiveness of the evaluation. Ending a highly motivational and rewarding session by handing out a questionnaire can take the edge off good feelings about the activity. Questions concerning changes in feelings and attitudes or reasons for staying in school may garner useful information by which to evaluate, but timing and appropriateness of the questions should be considered.

The very process of evaluation communicates to both students and community the importance of "being there."

Members of the community may happily engage in less formal types of evaluation. In some cases this interaction may also be related to recognition. Interviews with students and teachers at school- or business-sponsored functions relate valuable qualitative information with great candor.

Another important element of evaluation is the opportunity to say, "You are important." Students who drop out of school often express the belief that no one seems to care. The very process of evaluation also communicates to both students and community the importance of "being there."

Evaluation is a key to the success of partnership. Only through the use of feedback can participants in the partnership determine to what extent they have contributed, met goals, and made changes.

Diagnosis of a Troubled Partnership

A detailed profile has been developed in the preceding chapters for construction of an ideal partnership program. But, what if you have taken charge of a shaky existing program or somehow managed to get into an uneasy partnership situation?

The first year of partnership is usually rather rewarding. The good feelings may even carry into the second or third year. But, if the partnership does not foster deeper levels of involvement and collaboration, produce new ideas, or involve new people, it will fade and die.

Problems with continuation and renewal can be grouped into three major areas of concern based on a Brandeis University study of 21 partnership projects. If the reader needs to

diagnose an ailing partnership, the following checklists may be helpful:

1. A stagnant maintenance relationship
   - ✓ lack of recognition and publicity
   - ✓ lack of long-range plans or strategies
   - ✓ no basic understanding of the goals
   - ✓ lack of evaluation/no results
   - ✓ no changes were observed
   - ✓ no value was communicated
   - ✓ bureaucracies formed through paperwork and red tape
2. Changes in priorities
   - ✓ economic changes
   - ✓ curriculum changes
   - ✓ budget problems
   - ✓ goals were not agreed upon
3. Turnover in key players
   - ✓ not enough people involved
   - ✓ players got bored and sent a substitute
   - ✓ alternate members not well informed
   - ✓ too much delegated to uninformed people
   - ✓ lack of ownership or no say in the process

The turnover of key players is a continual hazard of partnership. Transfer, retirement, and promotion are inherent in both business and education structures. In addition to planning and revising for new evaluation data, the shifts in participants and their levels of commitment create a dilemma for the partnership program. Continual marketing and coordination of the districtwide program are necessary in order to survive major changes in leadership, economy, and personnel.

If the partnerships do not produce new conditions, changing priorities, valued data, and alterations in attitudes, and if these conditions, priorities, data and attitudes are not valued and acted upon, the relationship will not grow deeper. If partnerships are to last, we must not only ask for results, we must act upon them!

Ultimate Evaluations

Most important is she goes after what she wants and really cares about people. I hope I can be as good and special person as she is!

Comments by Stella, tenth grade, on her role model, 1986

The most interesting thing about his talk was that I learned something even though I didn't have to or didn't want to.

Eighth grade boy's comments on a guest speaker, 1987

You reached out and touched (our son) and made a difference in his life.

Thank you from Julia, parent of a gifted child, 1989

I didn't want to choose (college) because I never thought that I could make it there until you told me I could.

Malcolm, finishing his freshman year of college, 1989

You are my safety valve in life. I feel that whatever happens to me I can go to you for help, guidance, and support. I want to say thanks for all that...just knowing that you are there makes taking chances easier.

Tom to his mentor, Graduation, 1986

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The National Dropout Prevention Center's FOCUS Database

The National Dropout Prevention Center presents FOCUS, a collection of databases aimed at dropout prevention. This informative and user-friendly system makes information instantly accessible to educators, researchers, and policymakers.

Two components of FOCUS are the *Program Profiles* and the *Calendar of Events*. The first enables the user to locate specific data on dropout prevention programs across the nation by simply typing in key descriptors. Profiles are gathered from state and federal Departments of Education, the National Diffusion Network, and other organizations and agencies. Profiles are continually updated and added to the database, providing the most up-to-date information available.

The calendar lists national, state, regional, and local conferences and meetings on at-risk youths. It supplies details such as, dates, conference titles and topics, sponsor(s), contacts, and target audience.

Another feature of **FOCUS** is the Resource Materials Library. Users can locate publications, videotapes, and other materials shelved in the National Dropout Prevention Center which relate to at-risk youth by typing in descriptors. Additionally, the user can view the bibliographic information of title, author, date, publisher, a short abstract of the item and contact information.

FOCUS is accessible seven days a week through normal long-distance phone lines with the use of a personal computer and modem. Telenet subscribers may also access **FOCUS**. An instructional manual is available from the Center for $5.00 which entitles the purchaser to updates and additions.

For more information on becoming a **FOCUS** user, please contact the Center at the phone number listed on the inside back cover of this publication.

Additional Resources

National Association of Partners in Education, National School Volunteers Program, Inc., "Volunteers in the News."

Directory 90, Partnerships in Education Journal, 1132 Gershwin Drive, Largo, Florida 34641, 1989.

National School Public Relations Association, 1501 Lee Highway, Suite 201, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Cities in Schools, Inc., 1513 Cleveland Avenue, Building 200, Suite 201, Atlanta, Georgia 30344.

Bill Milliken, President, "Cities in Schools, Inc.," 1023 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Oregon Student Retention Initiative, 318 Public Service Building, Salem, Oregon 97310, (503) 373-1570, Ask for their publication, "Building a Community Business/Education Partnership - A Tool Kit."

For information about the Boston Compact: Edward Dooley, Executive Director, The Boston Compact, 26 Court Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02108, (617) 726-6200

White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives, The White House, Washington, DC 20500, (202) 456-6676

Public/Private Ventures, 399 Market Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106-2178, (215) 592-9099, Ask for their publication, "A Practitioner's Guide."

National Alliance of Business, 1015 15th Street NW, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 289-2888, Ask for their publication, "The Fourth R."

Dan Merenda, Executive Director, National Association of Partners in Education, 300 North Washington Street, Alexandria, Virginia 22314, (703) 836-4880.

Edmund M. Burke, Director, The Center for Corporate Community Relations, Boston College, 36 College Road, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts 02167, (617) 552-4545.

The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands, 290 South Main Street, Andover, Massachusetts 01810, (617) 470-0098, Ask for their publication, "Business-Education Partnerships: Strategies for School Improvement."

AT-RISK FACTORS FOR POTENTIAL DROPOUTS

Low Socioeconomic Level

Minority (particularly Black or Hispanic)

Parent(s) Did Not Finish High School

Language Problems

Frequent Absences or Tardies: Previous Suspension or Expulsion

Higher-Than-Average Rate of Discipline Problems

Low Achievement Test Scores

Low School Grades

Lower-Than-Average Intelligence Test Scores

Repeated One or More Grades

Severe Reading Problems

Poor Study and Work Habits

Reported Feelings of Alienation From and Disinterest in School

Unstable Home Environment (frequent moves, conflict between parents, single-parent family, family violence, alcoholic or unemployed parents)

Frequent Physical or Emotional Problems

Low Self-Concept, Low Self-Esteem, Feelings of Lack of Control of Life

Alcohol or Drug Abuse (includes underage use of tobacco)

Low Level of Participation in Extracurricular Activities

If Female, Being Pregnant

Enrolled in General Education Courses Rather Than a Vocational or College Preparatory Program

CLASP

Our Partnership

(NAME)

(SAMPLE PARTNERSHIP CERTIFICATE)

The
Number One Apple
Award

is presented to

_____

for a job well done!

CLASP

_____ _____
Date

(SAMPLE APPRECIATION CERTIFICATE)

For (School)

_____

_____

_____

and

For (Partner)

_____

_____

_____

Community Leadership And Support Program

Adopt-a-School Understanding

_____ HEREBY ADOPTS _____

and by doing so agrees to become involved in the following manner:

_____ school(s) agree to maintain liaison with

_____ and to keep channels of information open and up to date concerning resources provided and benefits derived.

The contents of this memorandum of understandings are subject to the policies of the Rock Hill School District Number Three and may be voided by agreement of both parties.

_____ _____

ADOPTER PRINCIPAL

This partnership has been reviewed by the Department of Instruction and is certified to be consistent with the district curriculum and accepted educational practices.

_____

DEPARTMENT OF INSTRUCTION

_____

DATE

(SAMPLE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT)

SEMESTER INVENTORY AND EVALUATION REPORT

Business/Education Partnership

Name of Business Partner _____

School or Program Partner _____

Person Responding _____ Title _____

Activities during the past semester:

Successes: _____

_____

Problems: _____

_____

Recommendations/comments: _____

_____

_____

How can CLASP help you at this time? _____

Return to: School District
Address...

(SAMPLE EVALUATION TO BE SENT TO SCHOOLS AND PARTNERS)

Name _____ *is a terrific teacher!*

School _____ *is a wonderful spot!*

Subject _____ *is great!*

My five wishes

-
-
-
-
-

Inventory: *Please list any community involvements which already affect your classroom . . . supplies, tutors, guest speakers, and so on . . . You already are doing some pretty wonderful things which need recognition.*

(SAMPLE NEEDS ASSESSMENT)

School District Name
Address
Phone Number

( ) I am interested in the Community Leadership and Support Program. Please contact me for an appointment to discuss the details.

( ) I like the program, but I am unable to help at this time.

INVENTORY. . . your involvement at this time _____

_____

_____

_____

INPUT. . . ideas or thoughts you would like to have passed along to educators

_____

_____

_____

_____

Name and address of business, group or individual:

_____

_____

_____

Person to contact: _____ Phone _____

(SAMPLE INTEREST SURVEY FOR BREAKFAST)

School-Community-Business Partnerships: Foundations for Dropout Prevention, a handbook designed to encourage the formation of vital, community-wide partnerships, is published by the National Dropout Prevention Center. Additional copies may be ordered for $8.00 plus shipping and handling. The Center has produced a variety of other products which can be helpful to those who work with at-risk youth.

To obtain a complete list of publications and prices call or write:

Publications Department
National Dropout Prevention Center
Clemson University
Clemson, SC 29634-5111
(800) 443-6392 out-of-state
(800) 868-3475 in South Carolina
(800) 656-2599

NATIONAL DROPOUT PREVENTION CENTER
CLEMSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

ROCK HILL SCHOOL DISTRICT THREE
ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA